

## TWO OPERA COMPANIES START AUTUMN SEASON OF MUSIC

## Performances of the San Carlo and American Singers Companies Considered Critically—Hard Usage of Famous Voices

By W. J. HENDERSON.

ONCE upon a time the musical season began with concerts, and toward the middle of December people began to go to the opera. We have changed all that. Perhaps we owe it to that restless and indomitable spirit still active in the breast of Oscar Hammerstein that we have been educated to expect opera before all things else.

Well, we are now plunged into the very midst of educational opera. We have had it since the doughty singers of Mr. Gallo's San Carlo company fell upon us with all their vigor in the very first week of September, and we now have still more enlightenment offered to us by the organization staggering under the weighty title of Society of American Singers. It is a great name, a portentous name, and will be hard to carry. Let us all hope that some later Johnson will not refer to the organization as having

"Left the name at which the world grew pale.  
To point a moral or adorn a tale."

Some singers are born American, some become American and some have Americanism thrust upon them. The present writer will make no attempt to place the various members of the society in their proper classes, but will content himself with the certainty that they will all stay here till the war is over, and that upon the first outward bound ship thereafter will go all who have had Americanism thrust upon them.

For it has been the invariable custom of opera singers for years and years to sail for Europe the morning after the final performance. They devoted much of their time to telling press agents how they loved America and the Americans, but they never remained in the country a single instant when not engaged in securing some of its money.

Now, to the quiet satisfaction of some of us, they have all had to stay here. They have had to summer as well as winter with us. Those who really like the country and the people—Scotts, for instance—find this no hardship. But if the inconsequential matter can give a moment's passing amusement, just note which of these American singers hastes eastward across the Atlantic the moment it becomes possible to do so for some purely personal purpose.

## Famous Voices Strained.

What else have the early days of the musical season brought us? Mischa Elman, John McCormack, Galli-Curci, Namara, Rudolf Ganz and Caruso tearing his throat out singing in public parks. It will be interesting and instructive to note in what condition his voice is when he appears on the opening night at the Metropolitan in the role of Ramon.

Mr. McCormack's voice shows much evidence of hard wear, but one can only praise him for his unceasing sacrifice to good causes. If he should eventually sing to us with only the rags of his once beautiful voice—and let it be understood that he has not come to that state by a long way—we should acclaim him nevertheless.

## Italian Opera for Italians.

But because operatic performances are given at low prices and the theatre is filled it does not follow that the performances are of high artistic worth. The San Carlo company gives opera as it is given in the smaller theatres of

Italy. Those who are familiar with life in the sunny land know that the masses adore opera, but care nothing at all for any other kind of music. The few concert enterprises of Italy are kept alive by the patronage of the intellectual classes.

In the new world the Italian continues to be an Italian. He goes to the opera, and to no other music. Hence the San Carlo performances are a joy to him. He constitutes half of every audience.

Meanwhile much energy is expended in the endeavor to delude the public into the belief that these performances are of great artistic merit. Some of them were praiseworthy efforts within their limits. The older Italian operas were passably performed. But there

MAGGIE TEYTE  
OF THE  
SOCIETY OF  
AMERICAN  
SINGERSWILLIAM WADE  
HINCHAW,  
PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
SOCIETY OF  
AMERICAN  
SINGERS

were some sad doings when modern Italian or French works were attempted.

The present attitude of a large part of the newspaper press in regard to operatic offerings seems to be one of eager partisanship. These newspapers appear to regard it as their duty not to view these performances as disinterested observers and to make dispassionate reports to the public but to help the manager to "make a go of it."

have weight and authority have become mere adjuncts to the press agents of musical enterprises.

Perhaps this is what the newspaper reader desires. But there is room for doubt. One thing can be declared without fear of error, however, and that is that while the name of the present writer stands at the head of THE SUN's musical department, that department will be devoted to the interests of the reader first of all. When the time comes, as it seems to be coming, when musical criticism cannot be printed in this town, the present writer will accompany his calling into its peaceful darkness.

## "American Singers" of Interest.

To return to the theme announced at the beginning of this rambling survey of the early season, what else has been disclosed to us? The Society of American Singers has begun its labors at the Park Theatre. Here the lover of musical art in all its forms finds something to stimulate his hopes.

It is no concern of his whether the thing is to be peculiarly successful, whether the artists were called out fifteen or twenty times, or whether the theatre was crowded. If the thing is good, the sincere lover of musical art will rejoice at signs of favor from the uncertain populace.

This Society of American Singers

ETHEL LEGINSKA  
WHO WILL  
GIVE SEASON'S  
FIRST  
PIANO  
RECITAL

possibility that they constitute the only real Growing Circulation Company.

## Mistakes in Repertory.

While the members of the Society of American Singers dare not overlook the opportunities provided by the spread of this propaganda, they are not directly or personally responsible for it. Meanwhile this aspect of the matter may be permitted to rest, for the music loving public will for the moment at any rate be more interested in the entertainments offered by the company.

The season began hopefully. "Mignon" is far from being an important work, yet the representation of Monday evening, deficient as it was in certain respects, undoubtedly gave real pleasure to an audience which did not seem to have arrived at the theatre with prepared enthusiasm. Indeed the assembly was indubitably indifferent at the beginning of the performance.

Owing chiefly to the well rehearsed ensemble Thomas's pretty but superficial music was soon finding its way to the fancies of the hearers. Among the principal singers only two could be regarded as of ability, fitting them to undertake their tasks, and neither of these attained high distinction. But

they pleased. The others were decidedly below the level of the score and passed the evening floundering in waters beyond their depth.

Unfortunately of the second evening's performance little of a commendatory nature can be said. Mr. Bispham did not know his lines—or at any rate forgot them—and was anxious and constrained throughout the evening. Bianca Soroye was dull and uninteresting as Marie and her singing showed a sad lack of mastery of the finer elements of the art. Craig Campbell delivered his share of the dialogue well, but sang weakly. Henry Hadley conducted, and he had a pretty hard time of it, for things seemed bent on going at sixes and sevens. Mr. Hadley at any rate showed that he knew what he was about. Let us hope for better things in the future.

But why did the astute managers of this enterprise begin their season with direct challenges to comparison with a big and long established operatic institution? "The Impresario" and "Bastien and Bastienne" two seasons ago were unknown quantities and they proved to be delightful. But "Mignon" has been sung at the Metropolitan by famous artists, while "The Daughter of the Regiment" is still in the repertoire and likely to remain there as long as Miss Hempel and Mr. Scott are members of the company.

And of all things under the arch of the heavens why "Carmen"? Are we not sufficiently "Carmenized" already? And what could result but unfavorable comparisons? Well, it is an interesting world and furnishes many fields for conjecture.

## NEW METROPOLITAN SINGERS.

General Manager Gatti-Casazza of the Metropolitan Opera Company is always very reserved when inquiries are made regarding his artists. So frequently has it happened that artists who have achieved very considerable distinction in foreign opera houses of the first rank have failed to please the public that patronizes the Metropolitan Opera Company that it is hazardous to prophesy the success of even an artist of the greatest European or South American fame.

Very flattering reports have reached New York from Buenos Ayres regarding the popularity of the new American lyric tenor Carlo Hackett and the new Italian barytone Luigi Montesanto during the recent season of the Colon opera—the Metropolitan of the Argentine capital. As for the new French barytone, Robert Couzouin, he is considered in Paris as the best of his class among the younger set.

Giulio Crimi, the new Italian tenor, has not been heard in New York, but those who have heard him elsewhere are of the opinion that he is a valuable addition to Mr. Gatti's phalanx of tenors. Reinold Wewersath, the new American barytone, is in the front line

## PROPER BLOUSES IMPORTANT TOPIC OF THE MOMENT

AFTER the momentous question of the fall suit has been settled the average woman immediately turns her attention to the blouse to accompany it. In former years the white lingerie waist was considered good form and quite elaborate enough for ordinary wear and most occasions. The changed conditions brought about by the war have almost banished the white waist.

It is no longer sufficient to plan one's winter outfit with a good coat suit and as many waists, more or less elaborate, as one can afford. Such charming blouses have been developed that the simple shirtwaist, fore-

made of rows and rows of many colored beads, like the fringes used on silk lampshades. The effect is novel enough to be pleasing, unless so startlingly colored that the result is garish.

Curious things, by the way, are being done with beads and fringe. I find a sand colored blouse of crepe, with a valance of dark blue silk fringe, hung round the neck and caught in at the waist in graduating lengths. Beads ornament everything. One of the clever ways in which they are used is shown in a brown and sand colored georgette. The sand colored material forms the foundation of the blouse

## Apron and Rainbow Effects in Newer Styles and Much Handwork Used

and over this is slipped an overblouse of seal brown georgette beaded along its outer edges with sand colored and brown beads, the smallest that are made.

Again a charming georgette blouse has the outer blouse of blue split at its crease to show bright spots of artillery red beads underneath. I observe in many of the fine blouses a disposition to bring back the high collar, light and severe about the throat. In some instances the neck is cut low, either round or square, and a straight stiff collar of georgette, bordered with fur or the inevitable beads, is added.

A fancy, new and more or less becoming to most feminine types, is that of the separate collar set on above the low cut neck and as apt as not to be of a contrasting color. The use of more than one color is strongly evidenced in the showing of the fall things.

## Rainbow Effects.

In fact there is a riot of color in some blouses made by sewing strips of light colored georgette together with fagoting. This sort of sleeve and yoke are set on the blouses of velvet which are extremely new and smart looking. They present something of the effect

of a rainbow, light green, watermelon pink, a vivid yellow and a scarlet strip being fagotted together with heavy silk threads. This sort of treatment of chiffon or georgette makes a graceful drape and one that is extremely effective.

The idea of embroidering very thin materials with heavy wool threads is more noticeable than ever. Especially pronounced is this sort of decoration in the tablier or apron blouse. There seems to be no end to the way georgette, crepe de chine and chiffon have been embroidered, appliqued, corded and used as a background for every sort of ornamentation.

Small rings of fine soutache braid have been applied all over the surface of some fine Parisian waists. As the soutache is white, a contrasting color usually the shade of the georgette making the blouse is employed for the interlacing ring used with it.

Some unusual waists of the rare Japanese metallic ribbons have been fashioned of a combination of the ribbon and a heavy black silk net. The ribbon is so handsome in itself, so beautiful in color and design, that no further need for ornamentation presents itself. Of course this sort of blouse is to be worn only on the more elaborate occasions and would be entirely out of place elsewhere. Since one can buy beautiful satin skirts ready to wear by the addition of an

elaborate blouse of this sort an entire costume is easily and quickly achieved.

## Much Hand Work Seen.

As a rule the imported blouse shows a great deal of hand work, dots, fagoting in hemstitching. Much fine work is done in gold and silver threads which are used to outline pleasing designs on a thin surface of chiffon or georgette. Clever makers have fashioned some good waists of strips of fine net heavily darned with silver threads in large spots. These are used over georgette of any color one desires and are very smart and new.

Satin also enters into competition with these thinner fabrics. But the greatest care must be taken to avoid a heavy look which satin is apt to have unless skilfully treated. A curious fashion has arisen of embroidering satin waists in sunbursts of gold or silver threads scattered rather thickly over the surface. These waists are made with a more or less shapeless effect impossible to describe, as they are curiously put together, the backs being gathered just below the shoulders in a pointed effect, finished off with a wide silk tassel and left to hang free.

Tulle seems to have lost none of its favor and it is seen more than ever. I find it cleverly placed in a French waist of black and white georgette and finest linen put together with strips of white tulle and finished with a scarf of the tulle left with ends free to float off the back. Of course so perishable a creation is for the occasional blouse only.

As tricolette is one of our best materials this season it has been introduced on many georgette waists and in some of satin or silk jersey. It is sometimes used in a rolling collar like a monk's cowl, which gives a very pleasing look when the heavier tricolette, closely woven, is placed thus against georgette.

The dark and sombre colors seem to predominate, though they are enlivened with the heading in brilliant effects such as I have described, and they cannot in any sense be called dull. The introduction of plastrons of gold or silver or other metal tissues also adds to the lighter effects and to the richness of the newer blouses.



Blouses of satin, Georgette and velvet.



of recital artists. It will be interesting to discover such other gifts as he may disclose on the lyric stage.

All Mr. Gatti's new sopranos and mezzo sopranos are American born. Best known among them is Alice Gentle, whose steady growth as an artist is a matter of record. Without other experience than such as she had acquired in her native land she went to Milan unknown and without influential introduction, had an audition at the Scala and was immediately engaged as prima donna contralto. War conditions prevented her from accepting an engagement at Buenos Ayres last year.

Rosa Eton, a Vermont girl, held her own as prima donna with the exacting public that fills the San Carlo Opera House of Naples. Margaret Romaine's voice and personal charm are best known in New York to operetta and musical comedy patrons. Helena Marsh, Mary Ellis, Mary McElish and Rosa Fontaine have had no stage experience and all owe their musical education to home training. Their operatic qualities await public revelation. "I think," was all Mr. Gatti would say. "I think that among the young American women I have engaged for the season there will prove to be some very interesting surprises."

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